Faith and Repentance

- Book needed: John Murray, Redemption, Accomplished, and Applied.
- PRAYER

Introduction

- **READ Luke 19:1-10**

- In our study using John Murray's Redemption Accomplished and Applied, **we've been studying the application aspect** of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ in recent weeks!

- Last week, our study centered on God's work on regeneration. We determined from Scripture that this activity is the **exclusive work of God. It produces a radical change in the life of a sinner**.

- **Man receives the gospel invitation, but there is a problem**!

- The sinful nature is totally incapable of responding! In the words of the Apostle, before regeneration, man is "**dead in trespasses and sins**."

- However, **though a man might be incapable, the Holy Spirit is NOT**! The Spirit of God comes with power and makes alive the person who is spiritually dead!

- Though many do not like to hear it, Scripture **teaches that man is passive in regeneration**. It is a new birth! Unlike our physical birth, over which we had no control, the new birth was also NOT something we controlled!

- In the words of **Ezekiel 36, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."** That is God's Work!

- **These truths should stir our hearts.** We should never tire of praising God for making us new creatures in Christ. These are **NOT cold academic truths,** And we must never treat them in that manner. This is the glorious gospel revealed by God!

- **Now, the question we need to ask ourselves is, what follows Regeneration**?

- **What's next in this great application of the Work of the Lord Jesus Christ?**

- **What is the response of a person who has been born again?**

- I believe Luke's account in chapter 19 regarding the tax collector Zacchaeus is an example of what follows regeneration. The Lord Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "**Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham**." Verse10

- **In other words, we see the conversion of a soul to Christ in Zacchaeus!**

- We see the response of a person who has been born again by the power of God.

- We see the **two key components of conversion: faith and repentance**!

- He was a "**son of Abraham**!" According to Galatians chapter 3, which applies to all who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ regardless of family heritage?

- **In addition, Zacchaeus demonstrated a sincere repentant heart**! Chief tax collectors were notorious for their greed and corruption, but now this person is anxious to change his life! What happened?

- Zacchaeus was a converted man!

- **On a Board (if possible), have a definition of conversion**.

- "Conversion is **our willing response** to the gospel call, in which **we sincerely repent** of sins and **trust** Christ for salvation. The word conversion itself means turning – here, it represents a spiritual turn from sin to Christ. The turning ***from*** sin is called repentance, and the ***turning to*** Christ is called faith."

- **Notice our willing response**! **We repent** and place **our trust** in Christ. **We turn from sin and turn to Christ! Man is no longer totally passive, as he was in regeneration**!

- By the Holy Spirit's work, those who have experienced God's work of regeneration have faith and turn from sin, but it is still our activity and responsibility to believe and repent.

- **In the words of John Murray**. "Regeneration is the act of God and God alone. But faith is not the act of God; it is not God who believes in Christ for salvation, it is the sinner. It is by God's grace that a person is able to believe, but faith is an activity on the part of the person and of him alone."

- Conversion is **OUR** willing response. **We** sincerely repent of sins and place **OUR** trust in Christ for salvation.

- True saving faith and repentance are the **certain** effects of true regeneration.

- Our **objective this morning is to answer two extremely critical questions**.

- **As it concerns the eternal good of the soul, there may not be more critical questions in life**!

- **What is saving faith? What is true repentance?**

What is saving Faith?

- **Definition – Shorter Catechism – Question 86**. **What is Faith in Jesus Christ**? **Answer** – **Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace** whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, and he is offered to us in the gospel.

- Murray writes: "**Faith is a whole-souled movement of self-commitment to Christ for salvation from sin and its consequences.**

- Before he defines the nature of saving faith, he asks an important question.

- He asks: "**What warrant, or assurance, does a lost sinner have to commit himself to Christ?**

- **How may he know that he will be accepted?**

- **How does he know that Christ is willing to save him**?

- **His answer is twofold**.

Universal Offer of the Gospel

- **First, a sinner can know he will be accepted because of the Universal offer of the Gospel. In other words, God is inviting, commanding, and urging all mankind to turn to Him.**

- We see this abundantly in God's Word in Old and New Testaments!

Isaiah 45:20-23: "Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save. 21 Declare what is to be, present it— let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. 22 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. 23 By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear."

Ezekiel 33:11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that **they turn from their ways and live**. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?'

- And, of course, the familiar words of our Savior!

Matthew 11:28 - Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

- God not only **invites** us to come but **commands** us!

Acts 17:30-31: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, **but now he commands** everyone everywhere to repent. [31] For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

- **So, how do we know God is willing to accept and save us? He invites and commands us to come**!
- **Over and over again in Scripture, God, in His great love and mercy, invites all people to turn to Him and live**!

All Sufficiency and Suitability of the Savior

- Now, not only can a sinner know God accepts him because God has invited him to come**, but he can also know he is accepted because Jesus is all-sufficient to be His Savior!**

- The sufficiency and suitability are based on the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Jesus' atonement for sin through His sacrificial death on the cross and the power of His resurrection proves that He is sufficient to be our savior!**

- **Hebrews 7:25**: "**Therefore he is able to save completely** those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them."

- **It is important to remember that our salvation is NOT because we have faith**!

- This is because the **object of our faith has accomplished salvation for us**—**Jesus alone is sufficient to save us!**

- **In other words, we don't rest in the fact that we trusted Christ for salvation; we rest and trust in the person and work of our Saviour.**

- Murray writes, "**The faith of which we are speaking is not the belief that we have been saved but trust in Christ so that we may be saved**!

- In Puritan **language, Thomas Watson** speaks of a faith that justifies and illustrates that faith justifies the object of faith, not faith itself.

- "**If a man had a precious stone in a ring that could heal, we should say the ring heals; but properly it is not the ring but the precious stone in the ring that heals**."

- So, the sinner can be confident he or she will be accepted by God because of

  a) **The free offer of the gospel to everyone**
  b) **Because of the sufficiency of our Savior.**

- **The next question is, what is the nature of saving faith?**

The Nature of Faith

- Saving faith is usually broken out into three areas. All encompass true faith in Christ.

  1. **Knowledge**
  2. **Conviction**
  3. **Trust**

Knowledge

- In **Romans chapter 10:14,** the Apostle Paul wrote: "**How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them**?

- Knowledge of Christ and the work of Christ is a necessary component to saving faith!

- That, of course, is why we have the Word of God. It reveals to us the knowledge of Christ!

- But **knowledge is NOT enough** for true saving faith. Knowing the facts about Christ's death and resurrection is one thing, **but that, of course, is NOT saving faith.**

- The devil has knowledge of Christ! **James 2:19:** "**You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder**."

- There is a particular danger in just knowing the Word of God. The Apostle Paul **tells us in I Corinthians "knowledge puffs up**."

- **King Agrippa in Acts 26 is a classic example of someone who knew and believed the facts of Scripture**.

- Do you remember what the Apostle said to the King when he was on trial? "**King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? <u>I know that you believe</u>**."

- Yet this was not enough! He did not have saving faith. The king told Paul, "**In a short time, you think to make me a Christian**."

- Therefore, knowledge of Christ's **work varies from person to person. While this** is essential to saving faith, it is not the only aspect.

Conviction

- **In his writings, John Murray mentions conviction, which is sometimes called assent, as the next aspect of saving faith after knowledge of the Lord** Jesus **Christ and His work**.

- Conviction acknowledges that what we know from God's word is true! There is a certainty. In the language of **Hebrews 11:1** "**Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see**."

- **It is NOT confidence that we have faith**! **It is confidence and assurance in the Lord Jesus**. Conviction that Christ's work on the cross is sufficient for the needs of my soul!

- Conviction that He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. Confidence in the object of our faith!

- This conviction is expressed in **Romans 10:9-10** "...**if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation**."

Trust

- **Along with knowledge and conviction, Murray presents the final element of saving faith as trust.**

- Please take the time to read a brief section of our book.

- **Read Murray page 111.**

- This trust is based on knowledge and conviction. It leads to surrendering wholeheartedly to Christ!

- **This is the receiving of Christ**. In the words of the Apostle John. "**To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become the children of God**." John 1:12

- John 3:16 is very instructive. J**ohn does not write whoever believes him** (speaking of Jesus). He says, "Whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." **In its original language, the phrase indicates reliance upon and trust in the object of faith**.

- **In his commentary on John 3:16, Leon Morris writes**: "**Faith, for John, is an activity which takes men right out of themselves and makes them one with Christ."**

- This activity of trust is the same as coming to Christ. The gospel repeatedly emphasizes the need to go to Christ.

- **John 6:37: "All that the Father gives me will <u>come to me</u>, and him who comes to me I will not cast out." John 7:37: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink**."

- **In summary, knowledge, conviction, and personal trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, all define the nature of Saving Faith**.

What is True Repentance?

- **Along with saving faith, true repentance is also the result of regeneration**.

- Conversion involves both repentance and faith. The catechism's answer is **a turning from sin to God**.

- "Murray writes: **The faith that is unto salvation is a penitent faith and the repentance that is unto life is a believing repentance."**

- Both are part of the message that the Lord Jesus declared at the very start of His public ministry. In Mark 1:15, he said, "**The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news**."

- Paul speaking to the elders of the Ephesus church in **Acts 20:21** "**I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus"**.

- **True repentance proves the genuineness of faith**. The believers in Thessalonica demonstrated this. In chapter 1 of I Thessalonians, Paul commends them for their "work produced by faith."

- In chapter one, **we see repentance from specific sins and associated saving faith**.

  "**[8] The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, [9] for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [10] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath**."

- **How was their faith shown?** Their **faith had become known everywhere, and their repentance demonstrated it**!

- **They repented of their specific sins**. Or, as the Puritans used to call it, our "Darling Sins."

- Murray is invaluable in this focus on repenting of specific sins.

- **READ Page 114.**

- The point is that true repentance means a willingness to surrender specific sins that we love to hold on to. No matter what they might be!

Repentance Defined

- **How do we define repentance?**

- The word in Scripture means **afterthought or change of mind**. It conveys a change of purpose.

- **Using the Shorter Catechism's definition**. **Question 87:** "**What is repentance unto life**? "Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, **turn from it** unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience."

- The definition suggests that biblical repentance involves **the mind** (a specific intellectual component or knowledge of sin), **the emotions** (feelings –grief and hatred for sin), **and the will** (turning from sin to God and endeavoring after new obedience).

- **In other words, repentance involves every aspect of a person**!

Intellectual

- **Starting with the intellectual component of repentance**.

- **Romans 3:20 teaches that through God's law, an awareness or consciousness of sin comes to man**.

  "**Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; instead, we become <u>conscious of sin through the law</u>**.

- This same knowledge of sin caused Isaiah the prophet, when he had a vision of Almighty God in Isaiah 6, to say, "**Woe to me a man of unclean lips**."

- Peter was aware of his sin **in Luke 5:8: "But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"**

- Psalm 51 is a clear example of someone knowing sin and wanting to turn away from it.

- "**For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only have I sinned and done evil in your sight**…"

- **So, awareness of sin is a critical aspect of true repentance**. But it does not stop there—it is a good thing it doesn't!

Emotions

- Along with the awareness that sin is against a Holy God, another aspect of true **repentance involves our emotions**. We are referring to what scripture calls Godly Sorrow. **2 Corinthians 7:10**

  "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

- **Godly sorrow is more than fearing the consequences of our actions**.

- **Scripture gives examples of people who were sorry for their actions, but there is no evidence of repentance**.

- The book of Hebrews speaks about Jacob's Brother Esau, who sold his birthright.

Hebrews 12:16-17 - "**See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. [17] Afterward, as you know, he was rejected when he wanted to inherit this blessing. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done**."

Matthew 27:3: "**When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders."**

- **So, there is an emotional element to true repentance.**

- **In the Old Testament, individuals and nations often expressed sorrow over sin and repentance outwardly**.

  Rituals and public worship events involved wearing sackcloth and sprinkling ashes on oneself to express sorrow for sin. These occasions were also marked by fasting.

- **Joel 1:13: "Gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God, for the grain offering and the libation are withheld from the house of your God. Consecrate a fast..."**

- This may or may not have always been sincere repentance, but it was meant to show remorse and sorrow for sin. Repentance and turning away from sin were a leading message of the Old Testament Prophets, leading right into John the Baptist's New Testament ministry.

- **John's preaching was primarily focused on what**? **Mark 1:**4 says, "**John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**"

- So repentance involves the intellect (knowledge of sin), the emotions (genuine sorrow for sin), **and lastly, the will, or what many early Christian writers liked to call volition**.

Will

- This is the actual activity of turning away from sin and turning to God! It **is obedience** to the command revealed in **Isaiah 55:7** and found throughout Scripture.

  "**Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon**."

  Jeremiah 25:5: "Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the Lord gave to you and your fathers forever and ever."

- The Hebrew verb TURN means to turn away from evil and return to the Lord. The Old Testament contains over 1,000 instances of this Verb, which should teach all of us the urgent need for repentance.

- This willful turning includes the intellect and the emotions. **It results in the fruit of repentance.** Remember John the Baptist's words to the crowds coming to be baptized in Luke 3?

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? [8] Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones, God can raise up children for Abraham. [9] The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." [10] "What should we do then?" the crowd asked. [11] John answered Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same." [12] Even tax collectors came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?" [13] "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them. [14] Then, some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money, and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

- Repentance is demonstrated by willful obedience to God. True repentance results in a changed life! John tells those he addresses that they must show the results of repentance by how they live their lives! The behavior change is NOT repentance itself but the fruit of repentance.

Summary and Application

- **In a study like this, it is essential to remember that conversions differ from person to person.** Though faith and repentance are always part of conversion, experiences vary greatly. People are different and will have different experiences.

- The importance of faith and repentance in conversion speaks volumes against an evangelism that trivializes sin. The notion that one can accept Christ and delay turning from sin until a convenient time is anti-biblical. Remember, in faith, there is repentance; in repentance, there is faith. This is no small danger in the modern-day church!

- However, conversion is NOT perfection. We will struggle with sin throughout our Christian lives, and believing otherwise is wrong. Next week, we will discuss justification by Faith.

- Next week Justification